

Message Text

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ORIGIN ERDA-07

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 IO-13 ISO-00 OES-06 DODE-00 ACDA-07
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DRAFTED BY U.S. ERDA/ISA: R BOWEN:BDM/SMJ

APPROVED BY OES/NET/IM: D B HOYLE

ERDA/DMA: C GILBERT

ERDA/DC: J GRIFFIN

ERDA/OPA: J CANNON

ERDA/OIPI: G HELFRICH

ERDA/ISA: J TORRES

ERDA/ISA: R CHAPMAN

ERDA/ANS: E GILLER

DOD/OSD/ISA: G HARLOW

IO/SCT-A JILLSON

ACDA-J BORIGHT

PM/NPO-J MCGUINNESS

OES/NET/IM-D HOYLE

-----050228Z 031955 /70

P 042229Z MAR 77

FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO AMEMBASSY LONDON PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY PARIS PRIORITY

USMISSION IAEA VIENNA PRIORITY

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E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: TECH, ENRG, PARM, IAEA

SUBJECT: DIRECTOR GENERAL EKLUND'S RECOMMENDATION THAT USG
MAKE PUBLIC INFORMATION RELEASE CONCERNING USE OF REACTOR
GRADE PU IN NUCLEAR WEAPONS

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REFERENCES: (A) IAEA 0521; (B) STATE 290336

1. DURING HIS MID-NOVEMBER VISIT TO WASHINGTON FOR THE
AIF AND ANS/ENS CONCURRENT CONFERENCES, D.G. EKLUND RECEIV-
ED AN UNCLASSIFIED ERDA BRIEFING ON USE OF REACTOR-GRADE
PLUTONIUM IN WEAPONS. THIS BRIEFING WAS PRESENTED BY
LAWRENCE LIVERMORE AND LOS ALAMOS LABORATORY WEAPON DESIGN

EXPERTS, DR. ROBERT SELDON AND CARSON MARK. AFTER THE BRIEFING, EKLUND, WHO WAS AWARE THAT SEVERAL U.S. AND FOREIGN GOVERNMENT, INDUSTRY, AND UTILITY REPRESENTATIVES HAD RECEIVED THE UNCLASSIFIED ERDA PRESENTATION, MADE ESSENTIALLY THE SAME RECOMMENDATION REPORTED IN REFTEL A, I.E., THAT THE ESSENCE OF THE BRIEFING BE PUBLISHED IN THE FORM OF AN OFFICIAL ERDA BOOKLET.

2. AT THAT TIME, ERDA GILLER STATED THAT THE BRIEFING AND RELATED PUBLIC AFFAIRS STATEMENTS

(REFTEL B) REPRESENTED A CAREFULLY CONSIDERED AND LIMITED DEPARTURE FROM PAST U.S. PRACTICE OF RESTRICTING OFFICIAL COMMENT ON WEAPON DESIGN MATTERS. GILLER LINKED THIS INITIATIVE TO SUPPORT OF RECENT PRESIDENTIAL NUCLEAR NONPROLIFERATION INITIATIVES, AND THE MANIFEST NEED TO IMPRESS CERTAIN NATIONS AND SECTORS WITH THE IMPORTANCE OF PROTECTING PLUTONIUM CONTAINED IN IRRADIATED POWER-REACTOR FUEL. ACCORDINGLY, KEY PERSONS WERE BRIEFED WITH A VIEW TO ULTIMATELY REACHING A BROADER SEGMENT OF THE UNINFORMED AND SKEPTICS WHO CONTINUE TO BELIEVE THAT REACTOR GRADE PLUTONIUM IS NOT USEFUL IN NUCLEAR WEAPONS. LITTLE THOUGHT HAD BEEN GIVEN TO THE IDEA OF PUBLISHING SUCH MATERIAL, ALTHOUGH WE HAD CONSIDERED ITS FURTHER USE IN A SUPPLIERS CONFERENCE CONTEXT, IN MUCH THE SAME MANNER AS THE EARLIER, BUT LESS COMPREHENSIVE, ERDA PAPER ENTITLED "USE OF VARIOUS GRADES OF PLUTONIUM IN WEAPONS" HAD BEEN TABLED FOR DISCUSSION WITH SELECTED CONFEREEES AT THE NOVEMBER 1976 LONDON SUPPLIERS MEETING.

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3. AT ANY RATE, DG EKLUND'S SUGGESTION WAS REPORTED TO THE ERDA ADMINISTRATOR AND TO INTEREST PARTIES IN THE INTERAGENCY NONPROLIFERATION AREA. THERE APPEARS TO BE SOME SUPPORT WITHIN ERDA, STATE, AND ACDA FOR DEVELOPMENT AND PUBLICATION OF A MORE COMPREHENSIVE OFFICIAL DOCUMENT FOR INFORMATION RELEASE, AS DG EKLUND HAS RECOMMENDED. ARGUMENTS FAVORING THIS APPROACH INCLUDE:

(A) THAT INTERNATIONAL SPENT-FUEL-REGIME NONPROLIFERATION EFFORTS ARE ENHANCED IF ALL SUPPLIERS AND CONSUMERS APPRECIATE THAT ANY/ALL FORMS OF PLUTONIUM ARE USEABLE IN LOW-TECHNOLOGY NUCLEAR EXPLOSIVE DESIGNS AND MUST, THEREFORE, BE SAFEGUARDED;

(B) THAT CONSIDERABLE PUBLISHED INFORMATION AND MISINFORMATION ON THIS TOPIC HAVE ALREADY ENTERED THE PUBLIC DOMAIN -- BUT UNOFFICIALLY -- AND THE RESULTANT UNCERTAINTY HAS INFLUENCED SOME DECISION MAKERS TO YIELD TO THE

ECONOMICALLY ATTRACTIVE BUT FALLACIOUS CONCLUSION THAT REACTOR-GRADE PU IS NOT USABLE IN NUCLEAR EXPLOSIVES, HENCE DOES NOT HAVE TO BE PROTECTED:

(C) THAT AEC OFFICIALS SINCE 1952 HAVE PUBLICLY STATED ON SEVERAL OCCASIONS THAT REACTOR-GRADE PLUTONIUM CAN BE USED IN NUCLEAR EXPLOSIVES.

(D) THAT BECAUSE THE MATERIAL IN ERDA'S BIEFING TO U.S.

AND FOREIGN GOVERNMENT AND INDUSTRY REPRESENTATIVES IS UNCLASSIFIED, CAN BE OBTAINED BY ANY U.S. CITIZEN UNDER THE FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT, AND WILL PROBABLY FIND ITS WAY INTO SOME PUBLICATION IN DUE COURSE ANYWAY, IT WOULD BE PRUDENT TO DEVELOP AND OFFICIALLY PUBLISH AN ACCURATE STATEMENT OF THE SUITABILITY OF REACTOR-GRADE PLUTONIUM FOR NUCLEAR EXPLOSIVES. THIS INFORMATION WOULD CONFIDENTIAL

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BOLSTER TECHNICAL ARGUMENTS IN SUPPORT OF U.S. NONPROLIFERATION POLICIES.

4. ON THE OTHER HAND, MANY BELIEVE THAT WE SHOULD CONTINUE TO SAY AS LITTLE AS POSSIBLE ABOUT THIS SUBJECT ON THE PREMISE THAT RISKS ATTENDANT ON CONFIRMATION OF THE EXPLOSIVE UTILITY OF REACTOR-GRADE MATERIAL OUTWEIGH ANY CONCEIVABLE NONPROLIFERATION BENEFITS. A DECEMBER 8, 1976 DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE LETTER TO ERDA QUESTIONED THE ADVISABILITY OF RELEASING EVEN THE INFORMATION AT REFTEL B, STATING THAT "THE PRESS GUIDANCE ATTACHED TO YOUR PAPER RAISES THE QUESTION OF THE PROPRIETY OF HIGHLIGHTING THE FACT THAT SPENT REACTOR FUEL HAS WEAPONS UTILITY. IF ANY NON-NUCLEAR NATION OR TERRORIST GROUP IS UNCERTAIN ABOUT THE USEFULNESS OF THIS TYPE MATERIAL, THE STATEMENT MIGHT INFLUENCE THE DECISION TO PROCEED WITH ITS PROGRAM. FOR THIS REASON, I BELIEVE THAT THE U.S. SHOULD NOT BE AS FORTHCOMING WITH WEAPONS-RELATED INFORMATION AS THE PRESS GUIDANCE IS."

5. BOTH ARGUMENTS HAVE MERIT, BUT MANY BELIEVE THAT, IN VIEW OF THE INFORMATION ALREADY AVAILABLE, THE LATTER VIEW IS LARGEY PASSE. ON BALANCE, THE WEIGHT OF OPINION PROBABLY FAVORS SOME FORM OF OFFICIAL PUBLICATION; ACCORDINGLY, ERDA HEADQUARTERS AND WEAPON LABORATORY STAFFS WILL BEGIN THE PROCESS OF PREPARING AN APPROPRIATE DOCUMENT THIS WILL INVOLVE ADAPTATION OF EXISTING MATERIAL INTO A SUITABLE FORMAT FOR PUBLICATION. COORDINATION OF THE PACKAGE AMONG INTERETED INTERAGENCY OFFICES, AND OBTAINING FINAL RELEASE CLEARANCE FROM POLICY-MAKERS.

6. WE WELCOME ANY ADDITIONAL THOUGHTS YOU MIGHT HAVE TO SUPPORT OUR DELIBERATION OF THIS MATTER -- PARTICULARLY WITH RESPECT TO THE PROPER METHOD OF DISTRIBUTING AN EXPANDED INFORMATION PACKAGE IF IT WERE DECIDED TO DO SO.

CHRISTOPHE
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptoning: X
Capture Date: 01-Jan-1994 12:00:00 am
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: PLUTONIUM, PRESS RELEASES, NUCLEAR WEAPONS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Sent Date: 04-Mar-1977 12:00:00 am
Decapton Date: 01-Jan-1960 12:00:00 am
Decapton Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
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Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
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Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D770076-0013
Format: TEL
From: STATE
Handling Restrictions: n/a
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Office: ORIGIN ERDA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
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Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 77 IAEA VIENNA 521, 77 STATE 290336
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
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Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 3202243
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TAGS: TECH, ENRG, PARM, IAEA
To: LONDON PARIS MULTIPLE
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vdkgvwkey: odbc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/95a6adbd-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
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